

THURSDAY AT THREE

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS.

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(Continued from yesterday's daily)

"This is outrageous. A person representing himself to be a Fenimore Dayton, an American journalist, wrote me a note. I don't know what demon of ill luck possessed me. I had never submitted to an interview. I am a very old man and in poor health. I permit no strangers to come near me. But something—perhaps in the note—I don't know—at any rate, I consented to receive this person at my club. He, or some one representing himself to be him, came, and we talked for about two hours. He was most agreeable, most intelligent, but he had been drinking—at least I feared so—I became nervous about the interview. He promised to bring me what he had written last night. As he did not, I came here this morning. I wish to recall the interview. I forbid the publication of a word from me. I shall hold you responsible, sir! It is an outrage! It is scandalous! I shall protest publicly, sir!"

"I have no excuse to offer, sir," said Dayton humbly. "I can only throw myself on your mercy. But first let me say that your interview is safe—at least it has not been published and will not be." Then he went on to confess the whole truth, holding back nothing—his love for a young American, the impossibility of keeping both engagements and the impossibility of breaking either. "And I suppose, sir," he said in conclusion, "that Carpenter slipped away and took several drinks before seeing you and then kept on drinking afterward. In spite of his habits, sir, there isn't a man in the world more competent to get such an interview than Henry Carpenter."

"Hasn't he written on sociology?" inquired Lord Frampton. He had been interrupting Dayton's narrative with a descending series of exclamations, beginning with "Shocking!" and "Depraved!" and "Insolent!" and ending with such milder ejaculations as "Most astonishing!" "Extraordinary!" "Surprising!"

"Yes," replied Dayton eagerly, entering the opening and hurrying on to remind Lord Frampton of the titles and subjects of Carpenter's best known essays.

Lord Frampton was somewhat mollified. He said: "It was a disgraceful trick to play upon an old man, sir, but I've been young myself. You Americans—a wonderful people, sir, but—with a sudden twinkling in his old eyes—"Will you get the young lady?"

"I think so," said Dayton. "I don't doubt it if impudence is as effective with the ladies as it was when I was a young fellow," Lord Frampton chuckled.

"Would you mind if I showed you a photograph of her, sir?" asked Dayton, shamelessly using his bride to be as a pacifier of the old man's wrath. He brought the photograph, a fair haired, clear eyed girl with a resolute face looking straight out of the picture at you.

"A fine American type," said Lord Frampton.

They talked for a few minutes of America, then Lord Frampton suddenly remembered his wrongs and was angry all over again. "I am very old," he said peevishly. "This will shorten my life. And where, sir, is that associate of yours, this Carpenter?"

"We'll find him," said Dayton, and after he had hastily taken coffee and a roll they set out for the far end of Pimlico. They found Carpenter's lodgings down a dismal alley in a house which, had it been built of wood instead of stone, would have been obliterated decades before. A pinched New England female face answered the knock at the door to which the slattern in charge had directed them.

"What do you want?" said she, in what is sometimes called the "pie and pickles" voice.

"Where is Mr. Carpenter?"

"That's what I'd like to know," Mrs. Carpenter answered.

A few minutes' talk made it clear that no news was to be got there. "We'll have to look for him," said Dayton, as if they were sure to find him. And on the way back to the Piccadilly-Strand district he tried to persuade Lord Frampton to go quietly to his club and wait.

"No," said Lord Frampton crossly; "I go with you. Really, Mr. Dayton, this is a most extraordinary proceeding. When peace and quiet are absolutely necessary to me, I find myself rushing about London in search of a wild drunken creature. My whole life has been spent in quiet, and now, at ninety, thanks to my accursed folly in answering a note from a wandering American journalist—I must have been out of my mind! I feel like pinching myself to see whether I am awake. I shall

not leave you until we find him. I must look to my reputation. Why did I—why did I answer that devilish note?"

Toward 9 at night Dayton, in the effort to calm one of the old man's tirades—he was very tired and sleepy—told him that Elsie and he were to be married on Monday. "As her mother won't consent, we shall go quietly to the American consulate. I've arranged it all with a friend of mine."

"Most extraordinary!" muttered Lord Frampton. "More impudence! And what am I doing here—at my age—in my health?"

"Will you come?" interrupted Dayton.

"Come! Come where?"

"To the wedding. We'd be delighted."

Lord Frampton stared. "God bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Am I dreaming? I—invited to take part in a runaway marriage—!"

"I suppose you're afraid there might be a mistake and you'd be the bridegroom."

Lord Frampton smiled, then chuckled, then laughed. But they were just at Carpenter's lodgings—their fourth visit. Yes, Carpenter had returned, had staggered in about an hour before, and was now upstairs. His wife opened the door. There he lay upon the bed, his clothes torn and mud bedaubed.

"Roll 'im on the floor," suggested the eldest boy. "Let me throw water on 'im. Ma'm always does, don't you ma'm?"

All, including the renowned philosopher, who used his cane vigorously as a prod, joined in the effort to revive the drunken man. When he at last opened his eyes Dayton said, "Here, here, Carpenter, where's that interview?" and kept on shaking him to prevent his lapsing into the stupor.

"Pocket," mumbled Carpenter. "Iss a gran' ol' man. Ol' Frampy passed 't out hot. Gran' ol' man, Frampy."

Dayton reached into the inside pocket of the coat and drew out a notebook.

"Ha!" Of Frampy clutched it, put on his eyeglasses and glanced over the pages. "Yes, this is it. I never expected to see it. Bless me, what a relief!"

Dayton gave Mrs. Carpenter a sovereign, "on account," he said, for lack of any other disguise of the charity, "and when he comes around tell him I want to see him."

Dayton and Lord Frampton hurried away.

"Where shall I set you down, sir?" said Dayton.

Lord Frampton gave the number of a private hotel in Dover street. They drove in silence for ten minutes, then the philosopher chuckled. Dayton glanced at him furtively. He had been devising a plan for approaching the subject of the interview. Perhaps he could induce Lord Frampton to give up the notebook. When the old man chuckled again he ventured to speak.

"Will you forgive me, sir?"

"Forgive you, you young rascal? I oughtn't, but—it is certainly very ridiculous—how my friends, my readers all over the world, would laugh if they could know what I've been doing." He chuckled again.

"Then you'll come to the American consulate on Monday at 10—to the wedding?"

"The spirit of adventure has got into my blood. Yes, I'll be there—if I don't die of the reaction."

"And that interview?"

"There, there! Not a word about that. I'll overlook it!"

"But I mean—it's a great impertinence to ask it—only!"

Lord Frampton turned in the cab and looked at Dayton's calm, earnest face in amazement. "You don't mean, my dear sir, that you are daring to ask me to—no; it's impossible. Even you wouldn't dare!"

"But, sir, it seems a shame for you to have all this annoyance for nothing. I can transcribe the notes and have them typewritten and bring them to you. And if you are not satisfied you can tear them up or use them for some other purpose."

Lord Frampton was laughing. "I have always held," said he, "that surprising results were to come from your race under the political, social and geographic conditions of the new world. But I must say—"

"And," pursued Dayton, "I could cable it over tomorrow for Sunday's paper, and I'm sure it would be a great hit. The Americans are tremendous admirers and readers of your work."

"Yes, I have been much gratified at the sales of my books over there—far better than here. But—it is tempting fate."

Dayton was discreetly silent. "You Americans!" Lord Frampton exclaimed humorously as he after a few minutes handed over the notebook. "I've rescued my reputation from a drunken man only to give it into the keeping of a harum scarum rascal who is probably crazed by—by—she is a devilish pretty girl, young man!"

"But wait till you see her on Monday," said Dayton. "I'll call with the copy at—what hour in the morning?"

"I shall rise late. I need rest. Call at 11."

At that hour the next morning, Sat-

urday, Dayton brought the typewritten interview. Lord Frampton was looking fresh and cheerful.

"How do you feel, sir?" inquired Dayton.

"I ought to feel done, but the fact is I never felt better. I think it did me good—stirred me up. Astonishing! I must be out of my mind!"

Lord Frampton sat at his desk, reading, making slight changes, nodding approval. "A most interesting young man," he mumbled, "in spite of his bad habits—most intelligent. I certainly talked surprisingly well, bless me! I had no idea I had put that so effectively."

"Are you satisfied to have it go, sir?" asked Dayton when the old philosopher had finished.

"I think so. I think so."

"And I'll see that you get a copy of it and also all that is said about it in the American journals."

On Monday at the appointed hour, with Lord Frampton as one witness and the consul general as the only other, Dayton and Elsie were married. Lord Frampton was more than cheerful; he was gay. He had come with his top hat a little back on his head and noticeably tilted to one side.

"Oh, I almost forgot," said Dayton. "Here's a cablegram from the office of your interview."

Lord Frampton read:

Dayton, Carlton, London: Frampton stuff howling success. Congratulations.

"Stuff! Howling!" Lord Frampton repeated the words as if he delighted in them. "Most gratifying," he said "most gratifying, I'm sure. God bless me, I'm getting demoralized!"

"And now for your mother," said Dayton to Elsie.

Lord Frampton noted with astonishment the calmness of these two young people. "Will she be angry?" he inquired.

"Angry? She'll be wild," said Dayton cheerfully. "She's mad on the sub-

ject of titles. Now, if Elsie were going to tell her that she had married you—"

Lord Frampton laughed till his sides ached at the implication of this idea. It seemed to take another ten or twenty years from his rapidly rejuvenating mind.

"That suggests an idea," he said. "If I went with you—interceded for you—do you think it would help?"

Elsie put out her hand to him. "Isn't he fine?" she said to Dayton.

And the three of them advanced upon Claridge's in a cab, Lord Frampton with his arm along the back of the seat, patting Elsie on the shoulder—merely to encourage her. Mrs. Grant went rapidly through her moods—from fury to hysteria, to tears, to reproaches, to a discussion with Lord Frampton, to acquiescence, to "making the best of it."

Lord Frampton left them, but came toddling back.

"Oh!" he said and took Elsie to one side.

"If there should be—you know," he chuckled, "my name is Hubert, and I haven't got any of my own."

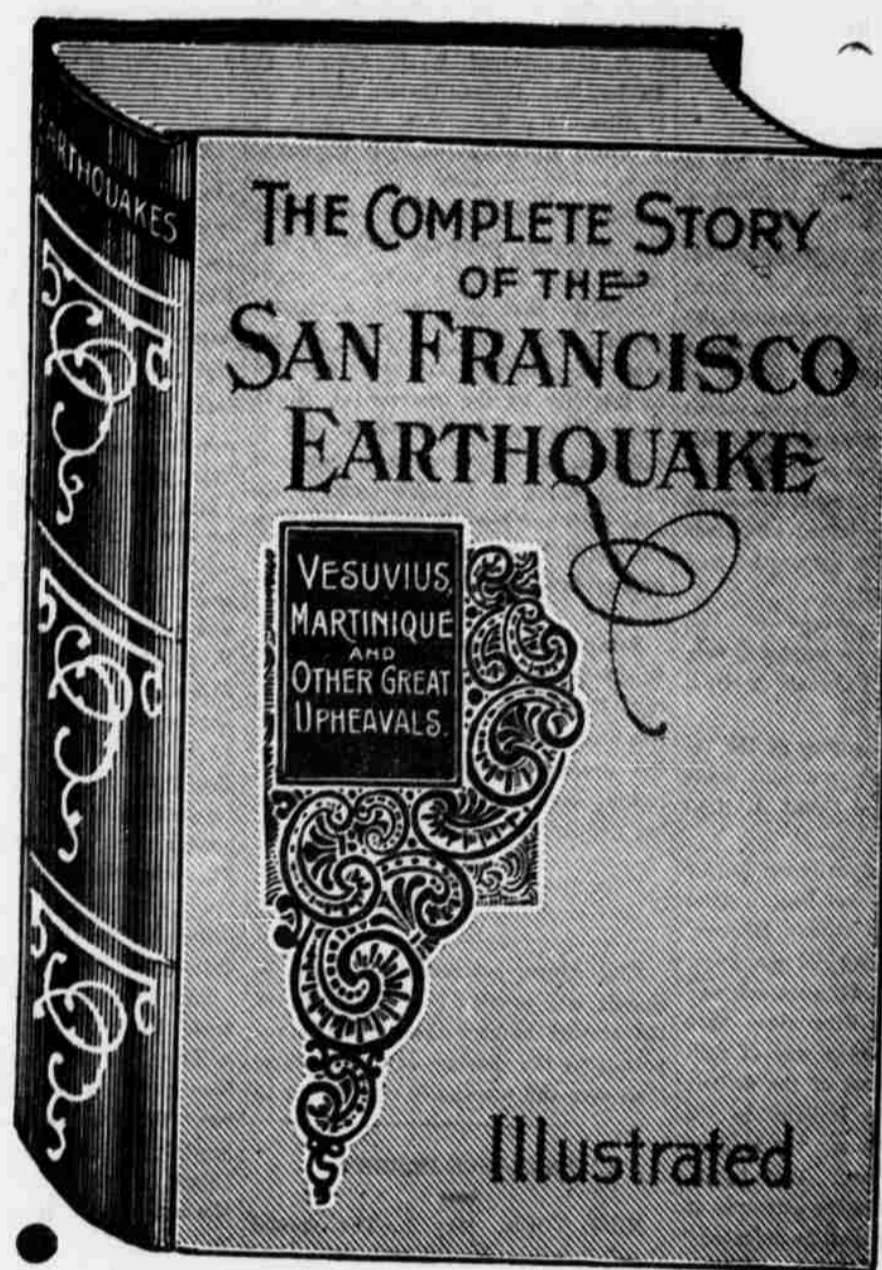
Elsie blushed, and he almost ran away, his old legs springing with a ludicrous affectation of youth.

"How can I thank you?" said Dayton as he put him in a cab.

"Thank me? How can I thank you?" said the old man heartily. "Send that disreputable friend of yours to me. Something may be done for him. Good-by. You Americans!"

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